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Study of the Daily Life of Seniors Living in Rural Districts

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Abstract

It is very important to improve the housing and environment for seniors with their child. However, we hardly know the conditions in which seniors live. As you know, some policies were established by the Housing Finance Ministry to give seniors better homes and rooms. But, these policies are geared towards seniors in big cities. I want to detail the reasons why many seniors can't have their own rooms by analysing the floor plans of their houses and their lifestyles.

The following process was used in my analysis: 1) determination of the floor plan of the house, 2) do seniors have their own room? 3) are there special considerations for seniors? (i.e. do they live on the ground floor or second floor, does their room face south or not?) 4) do seniors have their own facilities to separate their daily lives from their child's family? (i.e. a kitchen, toilet and bathroom) 5) can seniors join their child's family for meals and enjoy the pleasure of a happy home situation?

Key words : the floor plan, seniors with their child, own rooms, own facilities, own lives.

1. Introduction

The rate of the senior (65 years old and over) population in Japan was 12.1% in 1990, and the Statistics Bureau predicts that it will increase to 23.6% by 2021, which will be one of the highest percentages in the world.¹⁾ Also 60% of seniors live with one of their children's family in the same house.²⁾ This way of life will not change very rapidly which is one of the main differences between Japan and America. Furthermore, there is another feature. According to the National Survey, 9.4% of the population of big cities are seniors, compared with 13.4% of the population in rural districts. Now, in approximately 40% of municipalities, over 15% of the population are seniors.¹⁾²⁾

From this point of view, it is very important to improve the housing and environment for seniors. However, we hardly know the conditions in which seniors live.³⁾⁴⁾ You know, some policies were established by the Housing Finance Ministry to give seniors better homes by allowing them to borrow more money (1990), providing manuals on home improvement (1991),²⁾ and improving wheelchair accessibility to public housing (1991). These policies are geared towards seniors in big cities, and not to those living in rural areas, I think.

In light of this situation, some municipalities have tried to survey living condition of seniors and their impressions of their lifestyles. The dissatisfaction with their houses and environment is very deep. For example, a 1990 survey of seniors found that 85.6% of respondents 65 years of age and older live in their own homes, while 10.2% live in a hospital or an institution for seniors. But,

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a 1989 survey found that when people become older and need to be taken care of, 41.2% of people wish to move into an institution, which is a higher rate than the present. The reasons why people want to move to an institution include the shortage of helpers and a lack of equipment and space in the house necessary to care for seniors. I want to detail the reasons why seniors can't have their own rooms by analysing the floor plans of their houses and their lifestyles.

The following process was used in my analysis :

- 1) determination of the floor plan of the house
- 2) do seniors have their own room?
- 3) are there special considerations for seniors?
(i.e. do they live on the ground floor or second floor, does their room face south or not?)
- 4) do seniors have their own facilities to separate their daily lives from their child's family?
(i.e. a kitchen, toilet and bathroom)
- 5) can seniors join their child's family for meals and enjoy the pleasure of a happy home situation?

2. Method of the Survey and Profile of the Sample

I selected 7 areas in Kumamoto and 1 area in Miyazaki prefectures because 1) Kumamoto and Miyazaki are typical agricultural prefectures and there are many full and part-time farmers, 2) these areas are far enough away from Fukuoka City to be out of its influence, and 3) these areas have not experienced a rapid increase in population. I will briefly mention the features of these 8 areas. Tensui town and Misumi town are famous for oranges, and Sencho town produces tatami. These are typical full-time farming areas. Kawaura and Takachiho towns are famous for rice and forest, and are typical part-time farming areas. Matsui town is a fishing town. Last, as local cities, I selected Kumamoto city and Yatsushiro city, which have the largest and second largest population in Kumamoto prefecture respectively. We surveyed the house plans and the arrangement of furniture in all rooms, and therefore we heard what it was like to live in these houses. I selected as samples only houses built or enlarged in the past ten years. Table I shows the numbers and the features of the sample. As the sample was randomly selected, they are probably typical full-time

Table 1 The numbers, the features and occupations

	survey area	sample	year surveyed	percentage of farmers	occupations					
					full-time farmer	part-time farmer	fishman	self-employed	employee	not working
total		321			115	69	4	25	103	5
full-time farming area	Tensui	43	1986	70	36	7	-	-	-	-
	Sencho	41	1985	50	26	15	-	-	-	-
	Misumi	46	1987	30	30	15	-	-	1	-
part-time farming area	Kawaura	45	1988	40	20	25	-	-	-	-
	Takachiho	31	1985	20	3	5	-	6	17	-
fishing area	Matsui	20	1984	15	-	2	4	2	10	2
local cities	Kumamoto	54	1992	-	-	-	-	6	47	1
	Yatsushiro	41	1991	-	-	-	-	11	28	2

Matsui is percentage of fisherman

Table 2 Who do seniors live with?

	survey area	sample	who do seniors live with?			
			the eldest son's family	another son's family	the eldest daughter's family	another daughter's family
total		321	264	27	21	9
full-time farming area	Tensui	43	41	-	2	-
	Sencho	41	36	2	3	-
	Misumi	46	41	2	3	-
part-time farming area	Kawaura	45	37	5	1	2
	Takachiho	31	28	1	2	-
fishing area	Matsuai	20	20	-	-	-
local cities	Kumamoto	54	36	8	8	2
	Yatsushiro	41	25	9	2	5

Table 3 When did the young begin to live with?

	survey area	sample	when did the young begin to live with their parents?				
			the time of marriage	the birth of their baby	parent's illness	the time built a house	the others
total		321	253	10	22	26	10
full-time farming area	Tensui	43	42	-	1	-	-
	Sencho	41	33	-	-	8	-
	Misumi	46	44	-	2	-	-
part-time farming area	Kawaura	45	41	-	4	-	-
	Takachiho	31	26	-	1	4	-
fishing area	Matsuai	20	15	-	1	4	-
local cities	Kumamoto	54	28	3	10	4	9
	Yatsushiro	41	24	7	3	6	1

Table 4 Features of the house

	total	family size						
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9
total	321	16	34	77	104	59	31	
full-time farming area	130	-	11	24	50	32	13	
part-time farming area	76	9	8	18	18	7	16	
fishing area	20	2	3	5	6	2	2	
local cities	95	5	12	30	30	18	-	

Table 5 The numbers and features

	survey area	sample	family make up	
			three generations	four generatoins
total		321	282	39
full-time farming area	Tensui	43	34	9
	Sencho	41	35	6
	Misumi	46	41	5
part-time farming area	Kawaura	45	34	11
	Takachiho	31	28	3
fishing area	Matsuai	20	18	2
local cities	Kumamoto	54	53	1
	Yatsushiro	41	39	2

Table 6 Size of land and house

	size of land (m ²)										size of house (m ²)										
	150	300	450	600	750	900	1050	no			100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	260	no	
	answe										answe										answe
total	32	76	66	25	21	12	8	6	75		33	52	54	43	51	28	40	6	9	-	5
full-time farming area	3	7	47	8	8	1	4	6	46		7	11	17	22	18	18	22	3	8	-	4
part-time farming area	8	26	6	9	1	6	4	-	16		7	12	16	13	12	4	12	-	-	-	-
fishing area	13	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		10	7	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
local cities	8	36	13	8	12	5	-	-	13		9	22	19	8	21	6	6	3	1	-	-

No answer means the boundary between the land and the form is not clear.

or part-time farmers, fishermen, and salaried employees. People have many different occupations in Takachiho, Matsuai, Kumamoto and Yatsushiro, but in other areas, the main occupation is farming.

The census defines seniors as people 65 years old and older, but for the purposes of this study, this term refers to the oldest generation living in the household (or the two oldest generations in the case of four generation households). “Young” refers to the senior’s children.

Seniors living at home generally live with the eldest son’s family in all areas, but 34% of seniors live with another son or daughter’s family in local cities. In areas other than Takachiho, Matsuai and local cities, the child’s family began to with their parents from the time of marriage. In Takachiho and Matsuai, when the parent fell ill or built a house they began to live with their child’s family. In local cities people have many reasons, but in 55% of the sample the child’s family began to live with their parents from the time of marriage. This is the lowest rate of all the areas. Most of the areas continue to live in traditional ways but in local cities traditions have been somewhat eroded.

The areas with many full-time farmers have the largest family size of all areas. In all areas, three generations livig under one roof is most common. There is no difference between full-time and part-time farming areas.

The samples are 150~450 m² in area, and average between 150~200 m² in houses. Misumi and Takachiho houses are a little smaller than those in other areas. Matsuai has the smallest houses. Kumamoto and Yatsusiro’s houses are bigger than Matsuai’s, and are almost the same size as part-time farming area houses. Samples are the mean average value in all areas.

Families generally have one house but sometimes there are two houses on the same property, with one being larger than the other. The large building is used as a housewhile, the smaller is used as a storage-house or a garage. When the smaller building is used as a house, the habitants call it Betsumune, which means “the second and smaller building”.

3. The Features and Types of Floor Plans

I will now examine the floor plans of the houses that extended families live in. Examining the collected floor plans, some common factors can be found, 1) the kitchen/dining-room, 2) the semi-open rooms which open into the kitchen/dining-room and are used as the chanoma or the living room (I define them as the living room), 3) the tsuzukima (a traditional ceremony room that can be divided into two rooms using four doors), 4) the zashiki (a traditional ceremony room that cannot be divided), 5) the other semi-open rooms which open into 2, 3, and 4, 6) the rest of the rooms which don't belong to 1~5 which I call the separate rooms. From the point of view that



Figur1 1

Type A : the two units type

The building for seniors is old.

Seniors and the young have separate daily lives.

grand mother 82 years old

father 46

mother 39

child 14

child 12

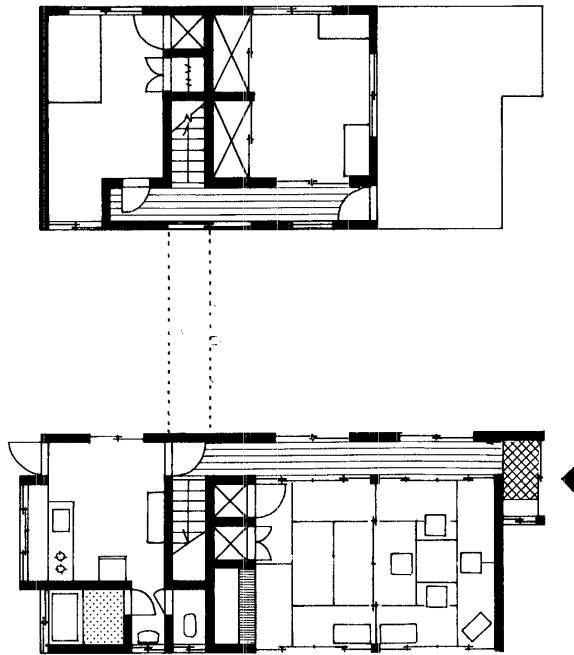


Figure 2

Type B: the tsuzukima type

The room for seniors is a converted tsuzukima.
The room for the young is on the second floor.
Children are so young that they don't need their one room.

Seniors and the young are together in daily life.

grand father 54 years old

grand mother 50

father 25

mother 26

child 2

child 1

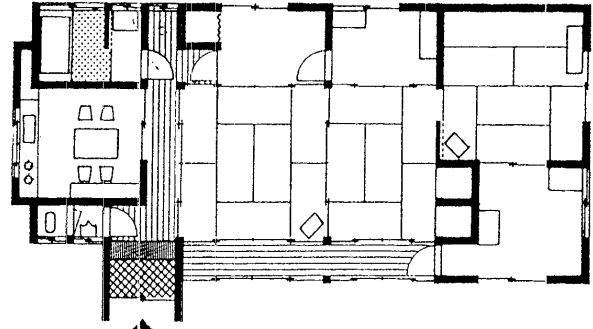


Figure 3

Type C: the tsuzukima plus one or more semi-open room type

The room for seniors is a semi-open but private room.

The rooms for the young and children are private.

One room is too small for three children.

Seniors and the young have separate daily lives,
because the young are so busy.

grand mother 63 years old

father 36

mother 35

child 12

child 11

child 8

rooms for seniors need to be separate, I cannot help worrying that some semi-open rooms will cause a shortage of separate rooms. Furthermore, they will have a serious influence on a separate life. Therefore it will be important to pay attention to semi-open rooms.

All houses in the sample have a kitchen/dining-room as well as a tsuzukima. 75% of houses have a living room. 25% of houses have one or more semi-open rooms. Most houses have 3 separate rooms, but some have 2, 4, or 5 rooms. The more semi-open rooms a house has, the less separate rooms there are.

Since all houses have the kitchen/dining-room and separate rooms in common, I will focus on the living-room, the tsuzukima, the zashiki, and the semi-open rooms. These can be divided into six types (table 7, 8, fig. 1~6):

Type A; the two units type, where seniors live separately from the young in another building or on another floor, with their own kitchen. This is only 14.3% of all cases and especially rare in full-time farming areas.

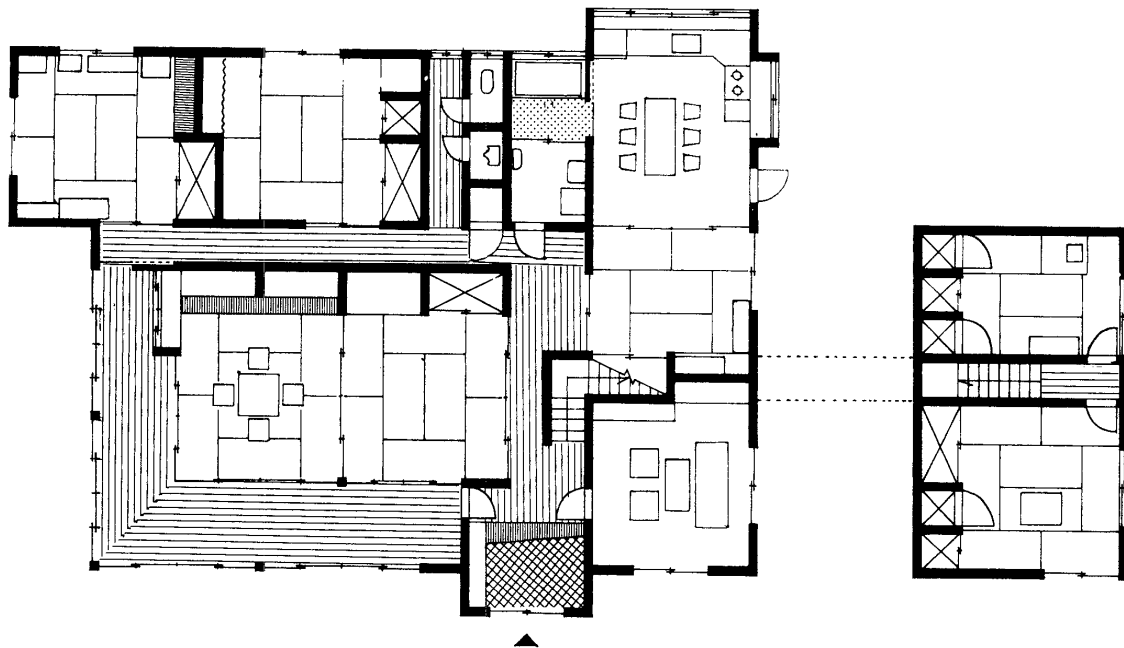


Figure 4

Type D : the living room and tsuzukima type

The rooms for seniors and the young are private room on the ground floor.

The room for the children are on the second floor.

Seniors and the young are together in daily life.

grand father 62 years old

grand mother 60

father 37

mother 36

child 13

child 10

baby 2

Type B ; the tsuzukima type (without living room and semi-open rooms). The rooms except the kitchen/dining room and the tsuzukima are kept separate by the wall or corridor.

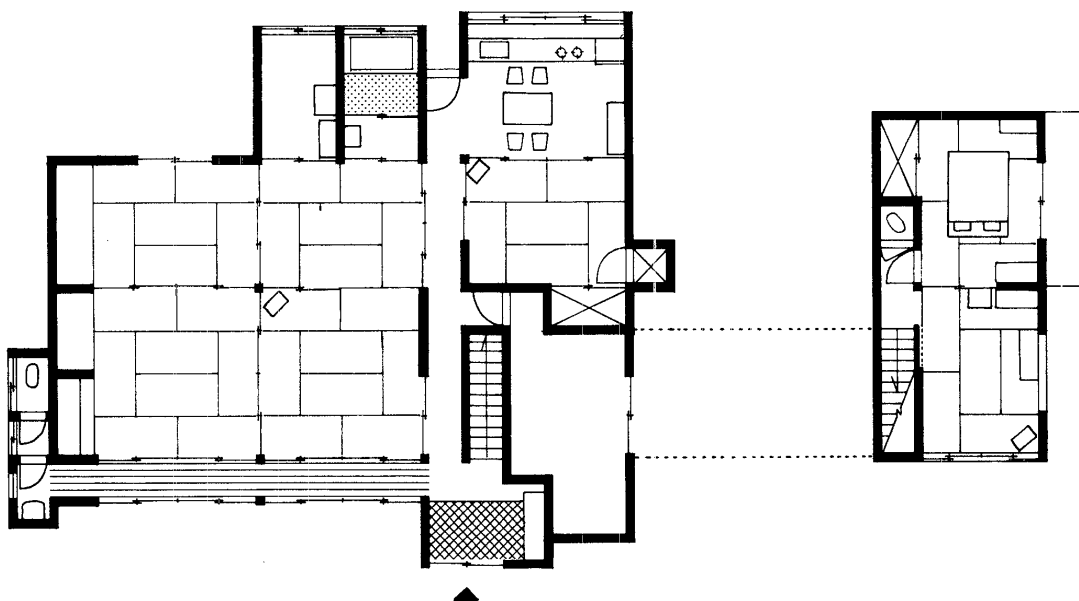
Type C ; the tsuzukima plus one or more semi-open room type. It is found almost only in full-time farming areas.

Type D ; the living room and tsuzukima type. There is a kitchen/dining-room, living room and tsuzukima, and the other rooms are kept separate by the wall or corridor. It is the most common type in all areas except Matsui.

Type E ; the living room/ tsuzukima plus one or more semi-open room type. It is found only in farming areas. From Type C and E, we can see that room arrangements with semi-open rooms are only found in farming areas.

Type F ; this type has the zashiki instead of the tsuzukima. It is found only in local city houses with small total floor spaces.

I have indicated all of the separate rooms and all types of floor plans in table 7, 8. I think it is important to examine whether the rooms for seniors are separate. The rooms for the young family members are generally two separate rooms upstairs, with no relation to the previously mentioned



Figur1 5

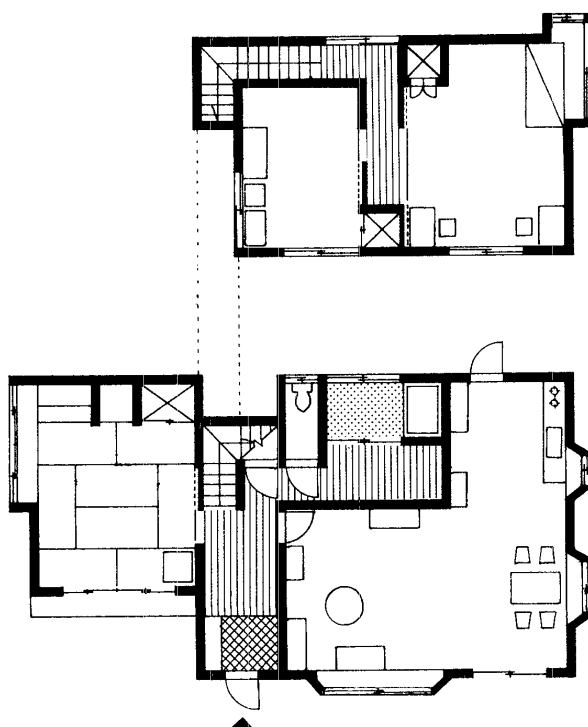
Type E : the living room/tsuzukima
plus one or more semi-open room type

The room for seniors is private.

The young and the baby are the same room together on the second floor.

Seniors and the young are together in daily life.

grand father	59 years old
grand mother	53
father	31
father	30
baby	0



Figur1 6

Type F : the living room and zashiki type

The room for seniors is aconverted
zashiki.

The room for the young is on the
second floor.

Children are the same sex so they are
together in the same room on the sec-
ond floor.

Seniors and the young are together in
daily life.

grand father	68 years old
father	42
mother	38
child	12
child	10

Table 7 Type of floor plan (areas)

	total	full-time farming area	part-time farming area	fishing area	local cities
		Tensui Sencho Misumi	Kawaura Takachiho	Matsuai	Kumamoto Yatsushiro
total	321	130	76	20	95
A two units type	46	15	11	4	16
B tsukikima type	55	12	8	13	22
C tsukikima plus one or more semi-open room type	24	23	-	1	-
D living room and tsukikima type	111	51	29	2	29
E living room/tsukikima plus one or more semi-open type	57	29	28	-	-
F living room and zashiki type	28	-	-	-	28

Table 8 Type of floor plan (how many rooms?)

	separate room								room for seniors				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	separate room on ground floor	separate room on second floor	semi -open room	tsuzukima	zashiki
total	3	11	62	103	2	37	27	16	195	23	28	67	8
A	-	3	5	8	9	9	4	8	46	-	-	-	-
B	1	1	9	25	13	2	1	3	32	3	-	20	-
C	-	1	8	8	2	2	3	-	5	2	10	7	-
D	1	2	19	34	9	14	17	5	77	9	-	25	-
E	1	3	9	18	15	9	2	-	18	6	18	15	-
F	-	1	12	10	4	1	-	-	17	3	-	-	8

types. From here I will examine whether the rooms for seniors open onto the living room, tsuzukima or semi-open rooms because of a shortage of separate rooms.

Type A houses are two separate units so rooms for seniors are separate. As Type B houses don't have a living room, the tsuzukima will probably function as one. Therefore four or more rooms are necessary ; one for seniors, one for the young, and two for the young's children. Only 19 cases in the sample (35%) had four or more separate rooms, and so the rooms for seniors might open onto the tsuzukima. Type C houses have semi-open rooms instead of a living room, so the tsuzukima will probably be used as one. Since four or more rooms are a necessity but only 7 cases in our sample (30%) had that many, 70% (17 cases) rooms for seniors will probably open onto the tsuzukima. Type D houses have a tsuzukima and a living room so there is enough room for family activities. Yet, in our sample 55 cases (50%) of Type D houses had four or more separate rooms, which was the largest percentage of all types. Type E houses have a tsuzukima, living room and semi-open rooms, but only 18 cases (32%) had four or more separate rooms. I think that the rooms for seniors must open onto the semi-open rooms or the tsuzukima. Type F houses have a living room and a zashiki, but only 5 cases (18%) had four or more separate rooms, so rooms for seniors must open onto semi-open rooms or the zashiki. As we have seen, if a houses has a living room, tsuzukima and semi-open rooms, the less separate rooms there are and it is more likely that rooms for seniors will open onto another room.

4. Facilities and Appliances for the Seniors

Generally we think that the rooms for seniors are the central part of their life, and of course the fact that they are for use exclusively by them is premised on the assumption that we try to make accessible houses. So, I will try to see whether rooms for seniors are exclusively theirs by examining whether they have the necessary equipment to live separately. First, to define "exclusive" and "convertible". An exclusive room is one's private room. A "convertible" room is where seniors sleep, but is used for other functions during the day. If the room where seniors sleep opens onto the tsuzukima, zashiki or living room, but is only used by seniors, it is regarded as private.

Table 9 Facilities and Appliances for Seniors

Room for Seniors		total	toilet	bath	kitchen	refrigerator	cupboard	low desk	television set	south-facing room
total		321	36	18	22	33	34	83	143	160
		130	6	1	2	9	3	23	33	50
full-time farming area	exclusive	103	6	1	2	9	3	19	28	23
	convertible	27	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	27
		76	5	-	-	1	1	10	28	36
part-time farming area	exclusive	62	5	-	-	1	1	8	23	22
	convertible	14	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	14
		20	3	3	4	4	6	6	9	/
fishing area	exclusive	10	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	/
	convertible	10	-	-	-	-	1	2	5	/
		95	22	14	16	19	24	44	73	74
local cities	exclusive	69	21	14	16	18	21	37	56	50
	convertible	26	1	-	-	1	3	7	17	24

Generally, all of the unmarried children in the family have private rooms. In our sample, 218 cases (68%) of rooms for seniors are considered exclusive because they are separate from other rooms. Another 28 cases are semi-open (only used by seniors), and when totalled, 246 cases (77%) can be regarded as private. There are no cases where seniors share their room with children over ten years of age, great-grandparents, or the young. Giving seniors a room that opens onto the living room is usually avoided, but in 67 cases (of 321) the tsuzukima was divided for sleeping while in 8 cases the zashiki was used for sleeping. Also, most of the rooms are on the ground floor but some are on the second floor. For Type A houses, whether there is only one senior or a couple, the sleeping rooms are almost always “6 mat” rooms (about 10 m²). Not all rooms for seniors are private, and even those that are show little consideration for them.

Now I will examine where convertible and semi-private rooms are likely to be found, and how they are affected by the demands of the young or their children.

Type A ; all the rooms for seniors are on the first floor and they are exclusive.

Type B ; 20 out of 50 cases are convertible. However, there were 8 cases in Matsuai and 7 cases in local cities, with very few cases in other areas. All family members except seniors have their own rooms, and the rooms for seniors are the first ones used when rooms are short (i.e. when visitors come).

Type C ; 7 out of 24 cases are convertible, and 10 cases are semi-private. Truly exclusive rooms are few. If the family room is attached to a semi-open room, the rooms for the young and the children are exclusive rooms. If there are few exclusive rooms, a divided tsuzukima becomes the room for seniors. If the family room is connected to the tsuzukima, the room for seniors is a semi-open room. We can see that rooms for the family and children take precedence over rooms for seniors.

Type D ; 23% of all cases are convertible (25 of 111 cases). As this type of house has a tsuzukima and living room, the rooms for the young and children are exclusive. If there are few exclusive rooms, a divided tsuzukima becomes the room for seniors. After the two unit type of house, this type has the most exclusive rooms.

Type E ; 15 out of 57 cases are convertible, 18 are semi-private, and the remaining 24 are exclusive. Sometimes a semi-open room opens into the tsuzukima and is used as the passageway from the entrance to the tsuzukima. In some cases a semi-open room is combined with a family room to make one large room, and in some cases it isn't. These semi-open rooms have no definite use and as a result, seniors have to convert the tsuzukima into their own room (cases out of 15). If a semi-open room is located far from the entrance, seniors can use it as their own room (11 of 18 cases). If there are few exclusive rooms, a semi-open room is used by the young, so the tsuzukima is used by seniors (7 of 18 cases).

Type F ; 8 out of 28 cases are convertible, and the remainder are exclusive rooms for seniors.

From this, we can see that quite a few rooms for seniors are exclusive (77%). However, seniors only have exclusive rooms after the young and children secure exclusive rooms of their own. If there are not enough exclusive rooms for everybody, the tsuzukima or zashiki is used by seniors.

Second, I'd like to talk about the equipment for seniors set out in table 9. Regarding equipment, I have selected some necessities. A toilet, bath and kitchen are necessary to lead an independent life. A refrigerator and cupboard is necessary to keep food and snacks for light meals and afternoon tea. For reading or relaxation, a low desk and television set are also necessities. Also important is whether the room faces south. In Japan, south-facing rooms are cool in the summer and warm in the winter and are usually the most comfortable for seniors.

Separate toilets for seniors are more common than separate kitchens and bath rooms, with 36 cases in total. In local cities, 23% of houses have separate toilets. In full-time farming areas there was only one case in our sample with a separate bath (Type A houses). There were 3 cases in Matsuai (also Type A houses), and 14 cases in local cities. There were no cases in other areas.

There were two cases of separate kitchen/sink in full-time farming areas. In one case there was also a separate bath and in the other there was a separate toilet. There were no cases in part-time farming areas. There were four cases in Matsuai : there houses (Type A) had a separate bath, and the last case had a small kitchen comprised of a gas burner and small sink. There were 16 cases in local cities : 14 in Type A houses and 2 with small kitchens (burner and sink).

Houses with refrigerators and cupboards for seniors are few, and the refrigerator is usually far from with the kitchen. In some cases there is a refrigerator but no kitchen.

In 26% of houses (83 cases), seniors had low desks. The majority of these desks were in Type A houses in local cities, and there were low possession rates in all areas.

There is a rather high rate of television sets. Exclusive rooms have them much more often than convertible rooms. Local cities have the highest rates of television ownership of all the areas.

Rooms for seniors facing south are 50% of the total (160 cases), and are found equally in all areas.

As we can see, a separate toilet, bath, and kitchen are not common in any area, and the same can be said for appliances except Type A houses. Only low desks, television sets and south-facing rooms are a little more common. From this we can say that it is not possible for seniors to live completely independently.

5. Separation of the Daily Lives of Seniors and the Young

I would like to make it clear, as I have previously stated, that rooms for seniors are not enough to allow them to live independently.

In this section, I want to examine whether seniors have the ability to separate their daily life from the child's family. For this purpose, I want to examine three main focuses in daily life : eating, family life together, and receiving guests.

a) Eating Together

In 88% of the sample (282 cases), seniors and the young ate together, and in only 12% (39 cases) did they eat separately. While eating together is most common, I am interested in the rare cases where people eat separately in farming and fishing areas. In these areas there were 13 cases. 3 of 13 cases were Type A houses and one other had a small kitchen for seniors. In 3 cases the seniors had been sick, and in the other 6 cases the seniors chose to eat at a different time. In local cities, eating separately is more common. In 26 out of 95 cases seniors ate separately. Type A houses comprised 16 cases, and the remaining 10 cases had various reasons, such as the seniors being sick or eating at different times.

To the contrary, there are 26 cases where the houses are Type A, but seniors and the young eat together. This is just in farming and fishing areas. The seniors live in another building but go to the main building to eat. I feel that the seniors do not want eat separately in these cases. The main eating place is almost always the kitchen/dining-room. When seniors eat by themselves (the young cook for them), they eat in their own rooms while the young eat in the kitchen/dining-room. If seniors cook for themselves, they also eat in their own rooms. Of course, since seniors need to cook

Table 10 Separation of the Dayly Lives of Seniors and the Youngs

total	eating			family life		receiving guest			
	together	separate	together	together for a short	separate	together	together for a short	separate	
total	321	282	39	170	61	90	165	57	99
full-time									
farming area	130	123	7	84	16	30	103	24	3
part-time									
farming area	76	71	5	54	10	12	39	27	10
fishing									
area	20	19	1	12	-	8	11	6	3
local									
cities	95	69	26	20	35	40	12	-	83

in the kitchen/dining-room, they have to cook after the young are finished, which is a very big problem.

b) Family Life Together

In 170 cases (53%), seniors and the young enjoy spending their leisure time together. Those families where seniors and the young spend time together for a short while after dinner comprise 61 cases (19%). Families in which seniors and the young only spend time together during meals comprise 90 cases (28%).

Families in which seniors and the young spend most of their time apart are most common in full time farming and fishing areas. In these areas, many times the young are extremely busy in a different building, or in fishing areas, the young are at sea. Another important factor keeping people apart is that the daily routines of the young and the seniors are not synchronized with each other and the seniors want to relax in their rooms.

c) Receiving Guests

I focused attention on the reception of daily guests only, not including guests for special occasions. The percentage of seniors who receive guests separately from the young is slightly higher than the percentage of seniors who spend most of their time independent of the young (31% and 28% respectively). There are regional differences, especially noticeable in local cities. 83 cases (87%) in local cities received guests separately. I feel a strong demand for separation there. Also, there are differences between full-time and part-time farming areas. Seniors in part-time farming areas tend to receive guests separately more than in full-time areas. It could be because there are more guests in part-time farming areas. I think separate reception of guests will increase. Almost all of the sample where seniors live independently of the young had separate reception of guests. There is little demand for the separate reception of guests among seniors who spend most of their time with the young, except for those living in Type A houses. However, there is a demand in other areas, especially in part-time farming and local areas.

6. Conclusions

The following findings have been obtained from a field survey conducted in 8 areas.

- a) Almost all types of houses have a living room and a tsuzukima, and semi-open rooms are present

- in some cases. Situations where seniors live in another building or on a different floor are rare. Of houses with a living room, tsuzukima and semi-open rooms, there are fewer separate rooms and it is more likely that rooms for seniors will open onto another room.
- b) 77% of rooms for seniors are private (9% are semi-open rooms used only by seniors), and 23% of seniors don't have their own rooms. In these cases the tsuzukima or the zashiki is divided for sleeping.
 - c) Most of the rooms are on the ground floor but some are on the second floor. Except for Type A houses, sleeping rooms for seniors are almost always "6 mat" rooms. Not all rooms for seniors are private, and even those that are show little consideration for their needs.
 - d) A separate toilet, bath and kitchen are not common in any area, and the same can be said for appliances, except in Type A houses. Only low tables and television sets are a little more common. From this we can say that it is not possible for seniors to live completely independently.
 - e) In 88% of the sample, the seniors and young eat together, and in only 12% do they eat separately. In 53% of the sample, seniors and the young enjoy spending their leisure time together. The percentage of seniors who receive guests separately from the young is slightly higher than the percentage of seniors who spend most of their time independent of the young. There are regional differences, especially noticeable in local cities. 87% of the sample in local cities received guests separately.
 - f) In conclusion, I could not find much consideration for seniors. I am convinced that some new policies and special floor plans are needed for seniors in rural areas. Because of the present situation, many seniors in rural districts have died in hospital or institutions, when they could have had happier lives living in their own homes.

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